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GAIN Report

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New Czech Ministers of Agriculture and Environment

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

Agriculture in the News

Agriculture in the Economy

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Report Highlights:

After six months of a caretaker government, Czech President Milos Zeman appointed a new center-left cabinet which includes social democrat Marian Jurecka as the new Minister of Agriculture, replacing Miroslav Toman and Richard Brabec, as the new Minister of Environment. Mr. Brabec is from the ANO movement, the parliament's newest party, one founded by the agribusiness billionaire Andrej Babis.

General Information:

On January 29, 2014, Czech President Milos Zeman appointed a new center-left cabinet, replacing after more than half a year the caretaker administration. The coalition is led by Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka from the Czech Social Democratic Party. The main focus of the new cabinet is economic recovery.

New Minister of Agriculture - Marian Jurecka is a young social democrat and former Member of the Parliament. Mr. Jurecka has a background in plant protection, having graduated with a degree in phytopathology from Mendel University in Brno. Mr. Jurecka started his working career on their family farm. In 2005, he joined the Lukrom Company as Head of Agrochemical Distribution Center. In 2010, he accepted a position as Head of Division of Agrochemicals in its Agro 2000 Company.

Between 2007 and 2009 Mr. Jurecka served as Adviser to the Minister of Agriculture, as Chairman of the Legislative Council of the Government for Agriculture and the Environment, as adviser to the Minister for Regional Development, and as a member of a regional Committee for Tourism Development.

Priorities of Minister Jurecka include finalizing national-level decisions related to implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy 2014-2020, setting rules for distribution of agricultural subsidies during the upcoming term, and review of Ministry operations. Mr. Jurecka indicated he would also like to focus attention on restoration of the countryside, and on increasing the level of Czech agriculture, in the sense of supporting local, high quality and value added production.

The Minister's initiative with reviewing internal operations has already bore fruit as several discrepancies in the Ministry's public tender and contracts process have been brought to light. The detected discrepancies, estimated in the order of millions of Czech crowns, resulted in suspension of Ministry public tenders for contract with values exceeding 0.5 million CZK (approx. US \$25 thousand).

New Minister of Environment - Richard Brabec is a member of ANO party, a former member of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and a graduate from the Faculty of Natural Science, Charles University. He has worked in multiple industrial companies - as the director of the Czech-Moravian Commodity Stock Exchange Kladno, in various positions in the financial section of the company Unipetrol, as Chief Financial Officer in Spolana Neratovice and as CEO of Lovochemie Company.

Since 2007, Mr. Brabec has been dealing with issues relating to European and domestic legislation on the environment, particularly the issue of REACH, an integrated permit system and emission allowances.

In his first week in office, Mr. Brabec addressed directly Czech NGOs and other critics that called for the new Minister to interrupt all relations with the chemical industry. They argued that the Minister should defend public interests, people's constitutional right to healthy environment and free access to the information about environmental pollution. By his actions he showed his critics his willingness to engage directly controversial matters that arise.